

# **A PROPOSED MULTI-FACETED PEER EDUCATION APPROACH TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Abstract**

Thus far, no youth intervention strategy has responded to the root causes of the HIV/AIDS crisis amongst young people through an approach that encompasses both a prevention and a future leadership strategy in one development model.

This article tells the story of the development and pilot process of an adolescent peer education model, for which the author of this paper was the leader. The model is being proposed as a youth development strategy to positively impact community social norms by using young opinion leaders as the catalyst for change.

The model was developed through an NGO, OIL Reach Out Adolescent Training (OIL), that specifically set out to pioneer, implement and evaluate best practice adolescent peer education in one cross-cultural community as a model for other communities in Africa.

OIL set out basing its belief in the efficacy of peer education on behavioural theories, which support it as a strategy for behaviour change. At the heart of their peer education pilot was the belief that the message giver is the strongest message; people don't change with information, they change when others around them change. Together with peer education theories, OIL applied a "futures-oriented" education approach in their curriculum development.

OIL set out with a definition of peer education as being "the process whereby skilled facilitators assist a group of suitable young people to: educate their peers in a structured manner; informally role-model healthy behaviour; recognise youth in need of additional help and refer them for assistance; and advocate for resources and services for themselves and their peers". (Deutsch, C. & Swartz. S 2003),

OIL strategically selected a community at the tip of the Western Cape to pilot,

made up of 4 diverse school communities and representing a microcosm of peri-urban South Africa as a whole.

OIL was selected by the Western Cape Education Department as part of the provincial pilot programme. The core programme framework was designed together with community stakeholders and adolescent community representatives. Selection of Adolescent Peer Educators was through a combination of self-nomination and referrals from peers. The aim of this process was to yield a diverse group of teens from all the different sub-cultures who were leaders, chosen on their shared experience with learners and making up 10-15% of the class.

Training content included a diverse values based curriculum that was designed to provide skills and information needed to tackle root issues facing young people and providing a sense of vision and purpose. Personal transformation of the peer educator was realized to be the critical factor in effective peer education. Over three years, a structured and long-term programme was put in place with programme standards and clear manageable outputs for peer educators.

Once the pilot was drawing to completion in 2004, the author of this paper as representative of OIL at the time, together with representatives of the seven other implementing organisations involved in the pilot, were brought together to compile their learnings and document a proposed common model for implementation from 2005 into other communities. OIL's model and uncompromising standards of peer education were recognized for future programmes to learn from and model. Challenges for future implementers include accessing financial sustainability, community buy and combatting HIV related attitudes

## **Opsomming**

Weinig beskikbare voorkomingsprogramme is tans op die jeug en toekomstige leiers gerig. In ander lande in Suider-Afrika word voorkomingsprogramme sterk op die jeug gevestig ten einde die visie van 'n Vigsvrye generasie in die toekoms te probeer verwesenlik.

Hierdie studie is as 'n gevallestudie opgeskryf met sterk klem op 'n volwasse opvoedkundige model en jeugontwikkeling en 'n positiewe fokus op jong opinieleiers, as teikengroep. Die uitkomst van die program is sterk op voorkoming gerig.

Die model is ontwikkel deur 'n nie-winsgewende organisasie (NGO), OIL (Reach Out Adolescent Training). Die studie beskryf die ontstaan, metodiek en implementering van OIL en beskryf sekere van die suksesse wat reeds daarmee bereik is.

Die teoretiese basis van die OIL program word beskryf. Ook word die belangrikheid van deeglike voorafopleiding en die transformasie wat deur OIL bereik kan word, deeglik op skrif gestel.

Die verdere verloop van die opleidingsprogram word uitgespel en voorstelle vir verdere navorsings- en ontwikkelingswerk word aan die hand gedoen.

## **1. Introduction**

Across sub-Saharan Africa young people are struggling to find their purpose and identity in communities ravaged by severe health, social and economic problems. They are at risk, not only of being left parentless and without role models, but also of becoming infected with HIV themselves. Studies show that without a radical and sustainable preventive strategy, HIV infection for the 15 million South Africans under the age of 15 is projected to be 50% by 2010. (Lovelife 2003). Already we are experiencing parentless communities on a large scale and a lack of community socialization has become a norm for many young people.

Thus far, no youth intervention strategy has responded to the root causes of the HIV/AIDS crisis amongst young people through an approach that encompasses both a prevention and a future leadership strategy in one development model. To mitigate the multi-faceted impact of HIV and AIDS on the lives of young people in Africa, a sustainable and multi-faceted approach is required.

The nation needs to respond to the increasing incidence of HIV infections amongst youth with an urgency which does justice to the scale and rate of such infection, while still accepting the reality that sustained and positive behaviour change requires significant investment of time, one-on-one mentorship, programmatic depth and resources. This is a matter of future leadership.

Up until now, the Department of Education has been responsible for ensuring HIV and AIDS related life-skills education is provided to young people at school. The Department of Health has been focused on the provision of access to HIV confidential voluntary counselling and testing (CVCT) along with other health services and treatment. The Department of Social Services has been responsible for the care and support of vulnerable people. This article will set out to tell the story of the development and pilot process of a school based peer education

model, for which the author of this paper was the leader. The model is being proposed as the only approach that combines the objectives of the three government sectors mentioned above within one youth development strategy to positively impact community social norms. It does this by using young opinion leaders as the catalyst for change.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 The OIL Dream**

OIL Reach Out Adolescent Training (OIL) was founded by the author of this paper in 2001. OIL is a dynamic non-profit community development organisation playing a key role in the transformation of communities through an adolescent peer education model. OIL began as a dream. This was a dream that a group of dreamers had together:

*The dream was to see an entire generation know their full potential and tap into that potential to see it become a reality. The OIL dream saw a generation that was filled with vision and purpose for their lives. In this dream the generation stood up across language differences, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds as a united adolescent voice. They chose to break the barriers of the past and to pioneer a new African future. In this dream the generation chose to see past the hopelessness and hurdles that the television and newspapers threw at them everyday. They chose to be the solution and to think differently. They chose to see themselves as future leaders who needed to start to lead today in every sector of society. They chose not to accept the label of the lost generation. They chose to understand that decisions they made today would not just impact their own God given destinies, but also the destinies of their younger brothers and sisters and the generations to come. They chose to go against the flow and build into their communities rather than against them. They chose*

*to put others first before themselves. They chose to lead the way by doing it themselves first. They chose to be nation builders. They chose to count the cost of true leadership. They carried a heart that loved their generation enough to speak up when it was tough. They chose to encourage their friends through their own experiences. They chose to rebuild dreams. They saw their communities change, they saw their province change, they saw their continent change. They saw Africa become a continent that showed the rest of the world what community is all about. They were pure and free and they walked to a different drum beat. The dream was for Africa and it was going to start at the tip of Africa and spread across the continent.*

The dream was then put into action in the form of a seed and OIL was established as a legal non-profit entity. OIL saw that the future leadership of sub-Saharan Africa was facing an economic and social crisis. Along with the HIV and AIDS crisis and its multi-faceted impact, OIL saw that young people were facing many social and economic challenges and being robbed of their futures. OIL saw that South Africa was approaching a tipping point in how it chose to respond to the management of its greatest resource: its young people. OIL saw that the nation could tip either way. OIL saw that if we are to turn the tide on HIV/AIDS and other social problems, a strategic response was needed. This was one which would mobilise youth development organisations, faith based organisations and community based organisations at grassroots, to promote sustainable and long-term change in their communities by using the means that most influence young people's perceptions, dreams and decisions - *their peers*.

## **2.2. The Formalisation and Theoretical Framework of OIL**

In 2001, OIL began the process of being established as a legal non-profit entity. Both formal and informal research was drawn on in order for OIL staff to establish a deeper understanding of developmental strategies for behaviour

change amongst young people. This was done specifically with the intention of applying peer education methodology as the vehicle for community change. OIL's vision and mission were established as follows:

### **Vision**

"We see a generation of Africans uplifting their communities and imparting vision and purpose to future generations to do the same".

### **Mission**

"To pioneer, implement and evaluate best practice adolescent peer education in one cross-cultural South African community as a model for communities throughout Africa".

OIL set out basing its belief in the efficacy of peer education on behavioural theories<sup>1</sup>, which support it as a strategy for behaviour change. The theory of *diffusion of innovation* is the most significant of these theories (Rogers,1995). According to this theory, peer educators are selected who are part of the social structure of the target group. It is the spontaneous discussions and role modelling that take place outside the formal training environment during informal peer-to-peer communication that allow for the success of peer education. OIL believed strongly that in order for this theory to work, the first step in this transformation process should lie in the characteristics of the facilitators as role models. At the heart of their peer education pilot was the belief that the message giver is the strongest message; people don't change with information, they change when others around them change.

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<sup>1</sup> While the intent of this assignment is not to present an academic study of peer education, those who are interested in further investigating the theories which underpin peer education are advised to read up on: *Social Network Theory* (Wolf, Tawfik and Bond), *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura), *Social Inoculation Theory* (Coggins and McKellar), *Role Theory* (Sarbin and Allen), *Sub Culture Theory* (Cohen and Miller), *Differential Association Theory* (Sutherland and Cressy).



Together with the above theories, OIL applied a “futures-oriented” education approach in their curriculum development as they set out to change behaviour. Investigation and research into young people’s social interactions, desires, negotiations of sexual discourse, and general attitudes reveal that risky behaviour is actually a symptom of a greater problem: a perceived lack of vision and purpose for the future. Risky behaviour (sexual, substance, or violent) reflects a lack of futures-oriented thinking. Adolescents are generally concerned with immediate risks and immediate benefits rather than the future. Caught between childhood and adulthood, adolescents are part of neither group and become particularly concerned with social acceptability and the opinions of their peers (Lear, 1995). This state of mind is exacerbated when the future is put in question by unrest, violence, poverty or disease.

In the course of the OIL pilot, findings from the *South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2002* confirmed that a multi-faceted strategy was needed in response to the crisis facing adolescents. This strategy should embrace a community development approach and address the root issues leading to risky behaviour through the impartation of vision. A lack of futures-oriented thinking is not new amongst adolescents, but it has serious implications for sexual behaviour and future leadership in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In line with these theories, OIL set out with the following assumption for seeing a progression of change take place amongst youth:

- **Personal transformation** - Peer educators experience personal change and make positive and healthy decisions with vision and purpose for their lives.
- **Group transformation** - Personal change of peer educators results in both formal and informal contacts with their peers. Peer groups and school communities are influenced to make positive and healthy decisions with vision and purpose for their lives.

- **Community transformation** - Change in peer groups and school communities impacts on community social norms and these communities are influenced to embrace positive and healthy decision making with vision and purpose.

### 2.3 An Understanding of Peer Education

OIL set out with an understanding of peer education that was underpinned by and adapted from the “Rutanang” (Sotho word meaning “learning from one another”) working definition of peer education. Peer education is defined as “the process whereby skilled facilitators assist a group of suitable young people to: educate their peers in a structured manner; informally role-model healthy behaviour; recognise youth in need of additional help and refer them for assistance; and advocate for resources and services for themselves and their peers”. (Deutsch, C. & Swartz. S 2003),

Effective peer education was believed by OIL to play a leading role in taking South Africa forward as it has the following unique advantages:

- It provides accurate, **skills-based, learner-centred** preventative education.
- Peers are better placed to be **influential role models** in the lives of their friends and younger children, than teachers or other adult professionals.
- Peer education **multiplies the reach** of our most effective adults.
- The peer educator team can appeal to **diverse learners**.
- Peer education harnesses the **power of peer pressure** and channels it as a **positive source** for change in sexual lifestyle and other behavioural areas.
- Peer educators, more easily than teachers, can provide **credible links** between schools and health clinics and other **community resources**, helping to advocate for Confidential Voluntary Counselling and Testing

(CVCT) and facilitating access to community resources.

- AIDS will have devastating effects on education and health professionals in South Africa. If we keep the youth inspired and safe, with constructive apprenticeships, the best of today's peer educators will have the enthusiasm, skills and experience to become the teachers, community workers and doctors of tomorrow. By helping to strengthen peer education programmes, many institutions in South Africa stand to gain ready-to-use young people to meet those needs.

OIL was aware that it was important to know what peer education is not. The Rutanang guidelines written by Deutsch, C. & Swartz. S (2003) were incorporated into the OIL pilot process and state that peer education is:

- **Not treatment for peer educators.** The purpose of the programme is for the benefit of the peer educators' peers and greater sphere of influence, not the peer educators. Obviously peer educators will benefit and be impacted, but it is this process that enables further impact to the target group.
- **Not a replacement for the teacher.** Peer educators are not there to replace the teachers or even to formally take over classes. They are there to complement, supplement and strengthen the life orientation curriculum in the school.
- **Not a replacement for professional services.** Peer educators are not there to replace professional services, such as professional counsellors, social workers, administrative staff etc. and should not try to provide therapy or treatment that is above their level of expertise as peer helpers with basic helping, listening and referral skills.
- **Not "whatever youth say it is".** Peer educators play an important leadership role in the programme, because they are still youths themselves. They can identify and understand their peers, but they are also on their way to adulthood and still need guidance and mentoring themselves.

- **Not a time for experimenting with new programmes.** The HIV/AIDS pandemic demands results. High, but realistic standards need to be set and sound practices implemented.
- **Not only an information provider.** Merely providing information does not change behaviour and once-off events will not be effective in the long-term.
- **Not about perfect peers.** One of the most common errors in any peer education programme can be the selection of peer educators who are model citizens and learners. Peer educators are on their way to becoming responsible young adults and should be allowed the space to develop as such.
- **Not a platform for personal testimonies.** Telling about their personal histories should be kept to a minimum. Helping young people to think, learn, decide, recognize their own need for help, feel comfortable in asking for it and knowing where to find it provides them with life-long learning skills. Personal stories need to be given in a learner-centered way that benefits the core learning outcomes.
- **Not about rehearsing, but rather performing.** Peer educators will not remain committed if they are spending too much time rehearsing and too little time “out there” making a difference.
- **Not about placing a selected few on a pedestal.** All learners should be given the opportunity to develop and be empowered. Facilitators should be encouraged to develop leadership qualities in all peer educators and learners with whom they come into contact.
- **Not about placing greater responsibility on a group of peers.** Activities and responsibilities should be low-key in the beginning and gradually as team members develop, they can be given more responsibilities.
- **Not only an awareness event or a health expo.** Peer education is more than an effective and efficient technology for raising awareness. Health expos, school assembly programmes and other once-off events are, for the most part, just awareness events. While certain elements of peer education involve raising community awareness, peer education focuses on facilitating a

long-term change in behaviour through educating and empowering key opinion leaders to positively influence their peers.

- **Not all dressed up with nowhere to go.** Peer education programmes do not train peer educators and then fail to give them enough opportunity to use that training in meaningful ways. Peer education is a delivery system for learners and it depends on sufficient learning opportunities and outputs. If there are not enough contact hours between peer educators and their peers, the programme will not be successful.

## 2.4 Desired Impact Amongst Youth as a Result of Peer Education

OIL had the following desired impact amongst school-going youth in mind as a result of their peer education pilot implementation programme:

An increase in:	A reduction in:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth leadership and advocacy within all sectors of society</li> <li>• Abstinence from sexual activity</li> <li>• Protective behaviour and faithfulness</li> <li>• Participation in volunteer counselling and testing</li> <li>• Support for HIV positive and affected youth</li> <li>• Adolescent clinic attendance (including recognition and treatment of STI's)</li> <li>• Cross cultural friendships and racial unity</li> <li>• School attendance, academic performance and completion of school</li> <li>• Adolescent driven community upliftment initiatives</li> <li>• Adolescent friendly implementing organisations in every community</li> <li>• Adolescents filled with vision and purpose for the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual activity of adolescents</li> <li>• Multiple partners</li> <li>• HIV infections and STI's</li> <li>• Teen pregnancies</li> <li>• Drug and Alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Gangsterism</li> <li>• School Dropouts</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS stigma</li> <li>• AIDS deaths</li> <li>• Adolescent sex-work</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Feelings of hopelessness and teen suicide</li> <li>• Racial division and inequality</li> </ul>

## **2.5 The Setting**

OIL strategically selected a community at the tip of the Western Cape to pilot a school based peer education model. The Western Cape was able to serve as an ideal context to pilot and develop a sustainable peer education model. This is due to it being a province that is further behind with regards to high prevalence of HIV than other provinces and it contains more resources. This meant that a priority could be given to a pilot phase of development and testing peer education for the purpose of sharing and supporting other communities nationally with a proposed model able to be implemented easily where peer education is needed the most. The pilot was therefore to be done with the mitigation of the orphan crisis in mind. Across South Africa and the SADEC region, children are being deprived of the guidance and protection of their primary caregivers and are therefore more vulnerable to health risks, violence, exploitation and discrimination. Peer education, using peer leaders to influence their peers, needs to be in place in communities that are particularly struggling with a lack of adult role models and community socialization.

The geographical area that OIL selected for their pilot, made up of 4 diverse school communities, represents a microcosm of peri-urban South Africa as a whole. This diversity within one area served as an ideal base from where to establish a living prototype of a multi-faceted peer education approach within a community development framework. The setting within which the OIL pilot took place consists of a cluster of four government high schools within one peri-urban geographical area of between 5km and 20km from each other. Together these schools cover a cross-cultural group of young people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Profile of Middle and High School A:

- predominantly white racial group
- former model C school

- English speaking first language
- well resourced.

Profile of High School B:

- predominantly coloured racial group with a large proportion of black Xhosa speaking learners
- academically dysfunctional
- Afrikaans and English speaking first language
- under resourced

Profile of High School C:

- cross cultural racial groups with majority coloured racial group
- Afrikaans and English speaking first languages
- average resources

Profile of High School D:

- predominantly black racial group
- academically dysfunctional
- Xhosa speaking first language
- very under resourced

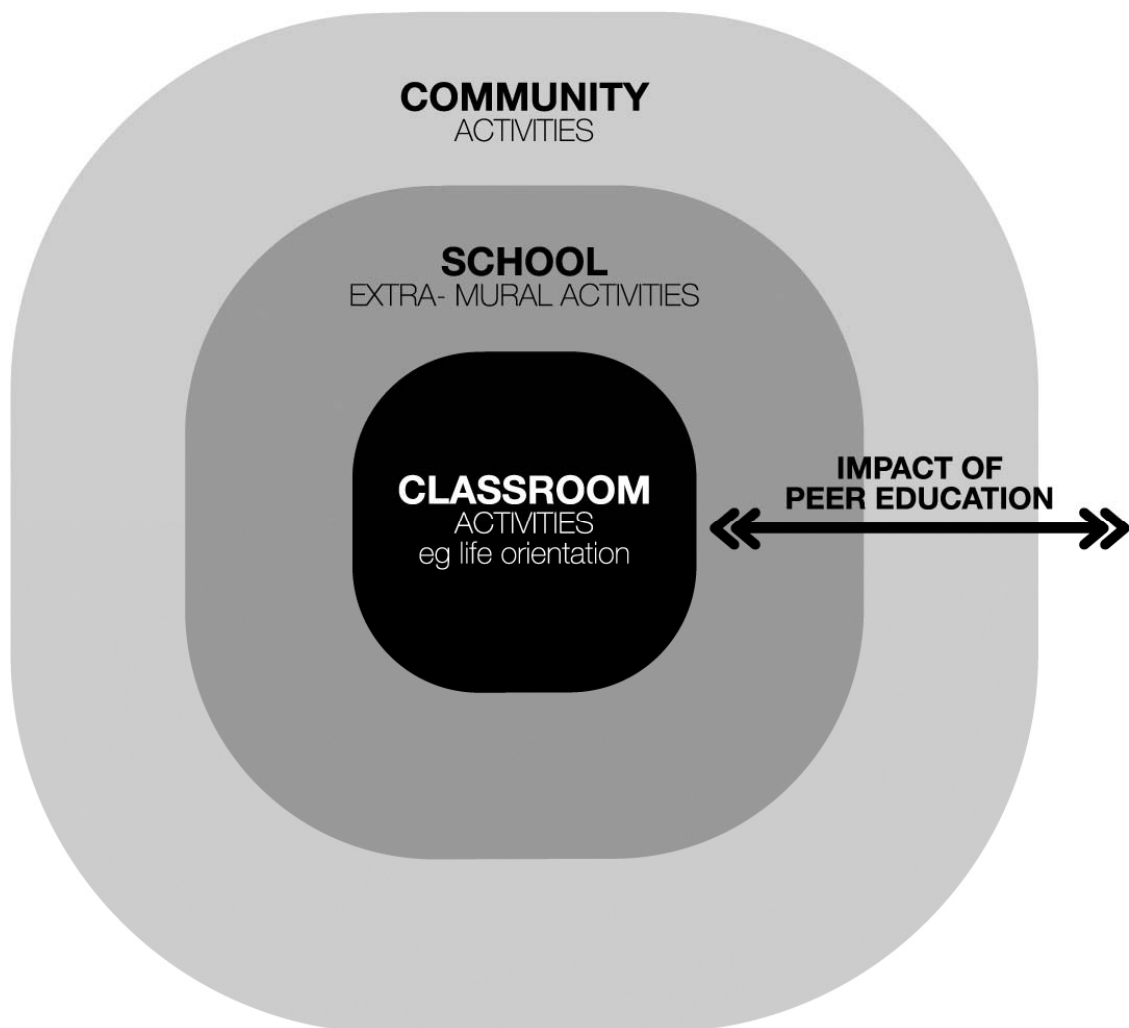
### **2.5.1 The School as Point of Access to Target Group**

OIL set out to work through schools as the vehicle to access youth. This is because the school system presents the perfect opportunity for accessing young people from all walks of life. Even the most rural of areas has some sort of schooling structure, which provides access to the young people of the area. These young people in turn have access to their parents, peers from other schools and peers who, for whatever reason, are not within the schooling system. The school presents the perfect administrative resource for peer



education. School break times and extra mural activities create great contexts for informal peer education to take place.

*Figure 1- The School Community*



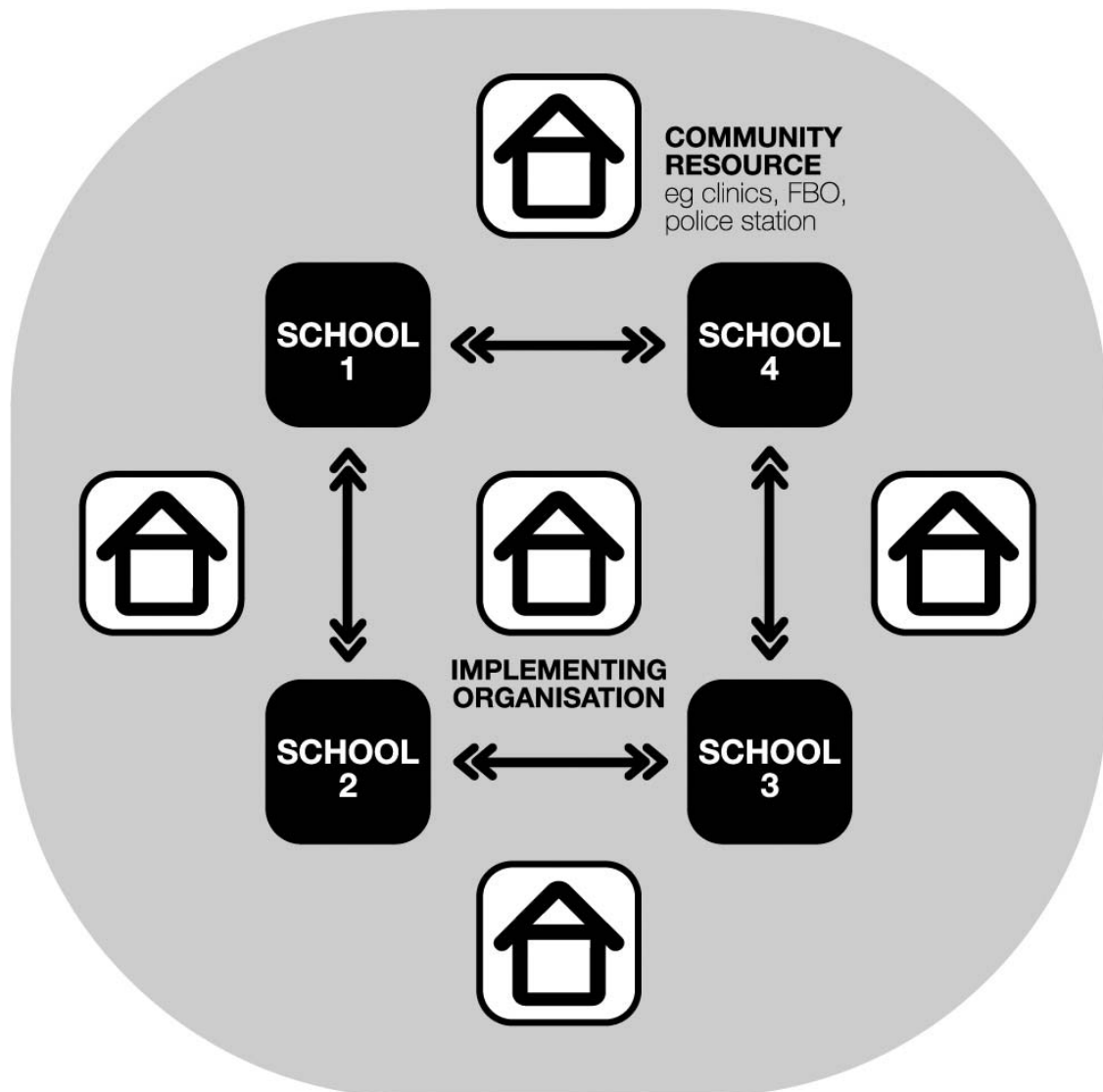
### **2.5.2 The School Cluster and as a Strategy for Enabling an Effective Sphere of Influence**

In order to truly impact the community, OIL saw it as important that peer education not tackle schools at random, but focus its efforts within a specific

geographical area and access youth from a cluster of four schools in the same larger community. Targeting a geographical area was also done to allow for the programme to have a larger sphere of influence. By working in a cluster, youth are also be afforded the opportunity to meet peers from other schools and collectively seek to impact their greater community.

For the programme's impact to extend to a community level, it was important that it be designed within a framework that extends from the classroom right through to the "party" on the weekend or the church youth group. This enforced the need to bring schools within the same area together to truly tackle broader social norms and see impact and mass participation for transformation.

*Figure 2- The School Community Cluster within the Greater Target Geographical Area*



### **3. The Pilot Programme**

#### **3.1. Getting Started**

##### **3.1.1 Western Cape Department of Education Peer Education Pilot Programme Selection**

Whilst the National Department of Education has identified peer education as an important intervention, it also instructed provinces to only commence with this once peer education standards were finalised at a national level. In the interim, the Western Cape Education Department, in partnership with 60 secondary schools and seven NGO implementing organisations, embarked upon a two/three-year "pilot programme", to be finalised in 2004 and fully implemented from 2005.

In line with the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) strategy for peer education implementation, funding was allocated by government for the first phase of the provincial pilot programme. OIL was selected in 2001 as one of the seven youth development NGO's to be part of the WCED's peer education pilot programme. OIL was selected for many reasons amongst which were the following:

- They had a staff who carried experience in youth development, HIV/AIDS and life-skills related adolescent, NGO and teacher training.
- They had a staff who were committed to pioneering peer education for broader use in the future.
- The school cluster setting they had selected served as a diverse and ideal context for a peri-urban pilot site within which to pioneer and test peer education.
- Their methodology and theoretical understanding of peer education was well founded.

From 2002 – 2004, peer education was piloted in 60 schools in the Western Cape through these seven non-profit organisations, known as implementing organisations. The pilot drew on the work of the implementing organisations as well as the work of Charles Deutsch from Harvard University and his team who compiled the Rutanang manuals. Rutanang was a set of guidelines for peer education that had been developed through a collaborative process of NGO's, Departments of Health, Social Services and Education over a three year period from 1999. The purpose of the provincial pilot was to apply peer education methodology within selected school communities and learn from praxis. The WCED recognised that there was a need to partner with youth development organisations to effectively explore different peer education strategies in order to support the development of a sustainable youth peer education model that could be used for broader use. This model was needed to play a key role to reduce the incidence of youth HIV infections and other youth risk behaviours, contribute to the mitigation of the impact of HIV and AIDS amongst youth and assist in preparing tomorrow's leaders, today.

Children and adolescents below the age of 19 years make up half of the South African population of 44.8 million. Almost 12 million children are enrolled in schools and they account for 28% of the population. The school setting therefore was recognised by the WCED as providing the ideal social context to reach young people, pass on life skills and equip young leaders as agents of change within their schools and communities. International research indicates that a minimum of 40 hours of teacher-learner contact time is required, per year, particularly at this age-level (adolescence) in order to bring about life style or behaviour change (UNAIDS, 1997). Outside of the formal classroom setting, peer education is the only strategy currently available that provides a structured framework and sustained opportunity to address HIV/AIDS (and related adolescent lifestyle issues) at the level of the needs of the adolescent.

Primary funding for the pilot was received from the WCED and later from Global Fund through grants from the Western Cape Department of Health. The pilot was guided by the Peer Education Steering Committee (PESC), which was made up of representatives from each of the pilot implementing organisations and the WCED. The author of this paper was a member of PESC.

Once OIL was formally part of the provincial pilot programme, they set out to begin their groundwork within the school communities that they had selected. They met with the local Education Support Centre to inform them that they would be pioneering and piloting peer education within the area's four government high schools.

### **3.1.2. Ensuring Organisational Capacity to Run a Pilot Programme**

In order to implement effective peer education based on the theories mentioned earlier, OIL believed an important must was to have a team of people who shared a passion for the development of the youth within the selected communities. As mentioned earlier, at the heart of OIL theory lies the belief that the message giver is the strongest message. It was therefore critical that the selection and character of each facilitator be recognised as crucial to the success of any peer education programme to be implemented. OIL believed that if peer education theory and methodology was not understood at this level, the transformational impact of peer education in any community, which begins with role modelling at a facilitator level, will be diluted. As a result, the following facilitator criteria grew to be accepted for the programme to render its desired long term results:

- 20-30 years of age.
- Must have a passion for serving and inspiring this generation with hope and vision.

- Should reflect a lifestyle of personal vision and strength of character and be committed to being a positive role model in all lifestyle issues.
- Excellent communication and facilitation skills.
- Ability to communicate with community stakeholders.
- Knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS and life skills related issues.
- Basic counselling and community development experience and/or training.
- Matric with basic tertiary education or past peer education learnership or two years community experience or volunteerism history.
- Leadership and administrative skills.
- Youth work and life skills background.

In order to function effectively, a supportive organisational infrastructure from which to operate was also critical. Due to a lack of resources and being a new organisation at the time, stable organisational systems were not in place from the outset. Constantly priority was made for the limited funds to go into delivery of the programme and as a result, organisational development and human resource payments were compromised. This posed an ongoing stress and risk to the sustainability of the programme.

### **3.1.3. Running a Community Audit in 2001**

Running an informal community audit was necessary before making contact with the selected school youth. This was necessary in order to discover what resources were available in the community and to ensure that OIL was familiar with the context within which their peer education pilot programme would be implemented. From October 2001, OIL held meetings with the local Education Support Centre, representatives of faith based organisations and key clinic staff. Several meetings were held with the managing nurse from the area, together with the principals of the four high schools selected for the pilot site. OIL's intention was to understand the needs of the communities and the young people therein. In order to do this OIL sought to find out area relevant information about

the following:

- The local structures.
- Problem areas.
- Community participation and forums.
- Community leadership structures.
- Relevant crime, economic, health risk and infection related local statistics.
- Number of learners attending schools.
- Cultural practices within the community and schools.

Laying the groundwork included beginning to link with key stakeholders and resources within the cluster communities and beginning a process of developing and fostering relationships with community stakeholders. These stakeholders include school principals, selected support teachers, reproductive health clinics, NGO's, churches and other faith based organisations. OIL recognised that community ownership of the pilot programmes, partnerships and collaborative processes were critical components for future programme efficacy.

Although all of the OIL staff had been working with youth prior to the pilot programme, they realised that every community is made up of different facets and different challenges. In order to ensure sustainable community development, they were committed that young people should be encouraged to own the process from the outset. Before any programme was implemented, OIL ran two, two day workshops and then a three day camp with 25 adolescents from the selected schools, five from each school. One school is split into both a Middle as well as a High school and therefore functioned as two schools. These young people were then labelled "community representatives". Not all the 25 were randomly selected but a portion were asked to volunteer or were selected by their principal. They came from grades nine, ten and eleven depending on the school. The workshops had the following outcomes:

- To equip the adolescents with basic knowledge and skills so as to be able to participate effectively in giving feedback for the pilot process ahead.



- To gain insight from the group discussion that would influence the directional decisions of the planned peer education pilot process.
- For OIL to gain a clear understanding of the specific needs and issues related to the particular schools and cluster from an adolescent perspective.
- To ensure that youth input and ownership was included from the outset of the programme.

The workshop topics included discussion around the following :

- Young people in their community, relationships and social activities.
- What the biggest issues facing their school and community are.
- HIV/AIDS, sexuality and lifestyle issues amongst young people.
- What resources are available to them and their friends.
- In the next 5 years what they like to see change in their community that would help them reach their full potential as a young person.
- Their understanding of peer education and the type of person that they think should be a peer educator.
- How they think OIL should approach a peer education programme in their schools and community.

Feedback from the above community audit activities showed that the selected setting, situated at the tip of the Western Cape is an area made up of four smaller diverse communities with a working network of key health and civil service providers and community based HIV/AIDS related organisations. According to the South Peninsula antenatal results, the area had a 14% prevalence of HIV at the time that OIL was starting their pilot programme but with a very high incidence rate amongst young people. Incidence of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancies were known to be “high” with more than half of the district’s STIs occurring in people under the age of 24 and with 1 in 3 births occurring in girls under the age of 19 (South Peninsula monthly district reports 2002). According to adolescent community

representatives, gangsterism; unemployment of parents; apathy; drug and alcohol abuse; teen pregnancy; stigma around HIV/AIDS and broken families were familiar vices for most of them in most parts of their communities. Clear differences were however noted between the specific school communities with certain issues being more pronounced in one community than another.

“Our friends don’t change with information, they change when other friends around them change”, said a sixteen year old adolescent community representative when asked how he thinks behaviour change occurs amongst his friends. Through several discussions, the community representatives voiced strongly that they felt their peers needed to be reached on their level, through a peer education programme which uses means which influence their perceptions, opinions, dreams and decisions the most. What seemed to be the common golden thread was the need for them and their peers to see lifestyles and decisions modelled, which lived today, will build for a prosperous future. They were tired of hearing information or being told what to do. Instead they wanted to see these answers “lived out”.

OIL set out to pilot the peer education process in a setting that could serve as a model for other communities and lead in its contribution towards a collective action that would cause transformation of programmes and policies at a national level in the years to come. The challenge for OIL in hosting the peer-education pilot work was to understand how to facilitate this behaviour change process and to establish appropriate relationships, training and tools to reach the adolescent target group on their level. This meant recognising adolescent participation as an essential approach to dealing with the key issues involved at the root of where young people discover their identity. This meant applying the feedback from the community representatives who with the support and supervision of OIL, were strategic partners in the design and implementation of the peer education pilot programme.

## **3.2 Delivery of the Pilot - Year 1, 2002**

### **3.2.1 Planning the year calendar**

The core programme framework with which to start the pilot programme was designed through the above mentioned discussions that took place with community stakeholders and adolescent community representatives. This took place towards the end of 2001 and before the first term in early 2002. Another day's workshop with community representatives was held in the first quarter. This year calendar needed to be confirmed with the principals and the relevant school teachers as soon as was possible. It was difficult as the schools had already planned their activities and timetable for the year, however the principals were very accommodating and made every effort to give OIL times and dates for the programme and to fit them in.

Programme activities that were being scheduled included assemblies and principal meetings with each of the schools. Schools also accommodated OIL by giving them class sessions within which selection of peer educators in the relevant grades could take place. Dates were also confirmed for when the selected adolescent peer educators would attend a training camp of three days.

### **3.2.2 Meeting with School Stakeholders**

The support and buy in of each school principal was essential for the long-term success of the programme. The first meeting with each of the principals in early 2002 had the following outcomes:

- The principal had a clear understanding of the pilot programme structure and objectives and he/she was given an opportunity to give helpful input.
- OIL gained the support of, and established a solid relationship with the school principals and was then able to make contact with the relevant teachers and school secretaries to assist in the administration and delivery

of the programme for the rest of the year.

Further meetings were scheduled later on in the year for ensuring an ongoing relationship with regular two way feedback that would be continuously fostered.

As mentioned earlier, OIL knew that key stakeholders needed to be a part of the process for efficacy of the programme. Therefore it was of great importance that all learners in the schools were informed about OIL, the vision and the programme. The idea of doing an assembly in each school had come from the adolescent community representatives. OIL did a ten to twenty minute assembly at each of the schools within its cluster. Each assembly had the following objectives:

- To build a profile of the peer education programme within the school as a whole.
- To ensure that the school community had put a face to OIL and that rapport was established.
- To give an overview of the heart and vision of OIL peer education.
- To explain what would happen during the current year in the programme.
- To explain how all the learners in the school could be involved in the programme.
- To brief the relevant grades on the recruitment process that would take place in the following weeks.
- To give a relevant up to date “mini talk” about youth health risks in the context of inspiring vision and purpose amongst young people in the school.

### **3.2.3 Selection of Adolescent Peer Educators**

OIL arranged to meet with each class of the selected grade in each school. As a cluster, these ranged from grade nine to grade eleven. OIL selected different grades for the first year of the pilot to learn about the impact of the different ages

and grades with regards to effective peer education. Learners volunteered themselves or were nominated by their peers according to certain criteria and were then elected. Peer leaders were elected for the programme through a combination of self-nomination and referrals from peers, who were asked to identify the friends or acquaintances they would be most likely to ask about issues related to themselves as young people. The aim of this process was to yield a diverse group of teens from all the different sub-cultures who were leaders, chosen on their shared experience with learners and making up 10-15% of the class. Potential peer educators were told that they should be nominated as change agents within their communities that would have a role of mobilising their friends and communities towards transformation.

Before candidates were elected, the attributes were outlined within the class period in the chosen grades at the school. This pre-selection presentation was delivered by a minimum of two skilled facilitators from OIL. An understanding of the programme's life cycle and commitment was not clearly communicated as the programme was new and therefore all that was communicated was the understanding of a commitment for the year and that they needed to attend a three day camp as well as certain follow up days. Based on this information, the class then voted and elected 15% of their class. They were asked to vote for people they thought best fitted the following criteria:

The nominated peer is someone who:

- Will represent his/her class and grade.
- Will be trained and equipped in the area of HIV/AIDS, sexuality and lifestyle education issues.
- Has a passion to be a positive role model.
- Is opinionated.
- Is reliable and trustworthy.
- Is willing to work in a cross-cultural team.
- Possesses leadership qualities.
- Is willing to examine his/her own life choices, and question whether these

decisions are having a positive and healthy impact on the future.

It was the intention of OIL that once the candidates had participated in the three day training camp successfully they would start to develop as individuals capable of demonstrating the above characteristics. These characteristics, combined with a knowledge base of community and adolescent related issues, would ensure their readiness to perform effective peer education and influence their friends.

Elected peer educators were given letters to pass on to their parents or guardians. This was important to ensure that final approval was received to allow learners to join the programme and attend the camps. The letters also communicated with parents the way ahead for their child with regards to involvement in the programme.

### **3.2.3. Training of the Peer Educators**

OIL ran a three day orientation training camp for each of the school groups of peer educators. These camps took place within the first half of the year. Training content included a diverse values based curriculum that was designed to provide skills and information needed to tackle root issues facing young people with a future's oriented approach. Some topics that the young leaders engaged with were the following:

- The vision of OIL.
- Reaching Your Community.
- HIV/AIDS, Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Attitudes.
- Love, Sexuality and Healthy Relationships.
- Substance Abuse.
- Vision and Goal setting.
- Reaching Your Destiny.
- Basic Communication and Helping Skills.

- Team Building.
- The Biggest Issues Facing my School and Community.
- The Roles of a Peer Educator.
- Making Choices.

Although the camps were a great success with base line and post tests revealing a positive change in knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviour, OIL facilitators spent much time listening to the problems that the peer educators had and assisting them to problem solve. There was a clear realization that before the peer educators could go out and influence their peers effectively there needed to be more time and investment into them in terms of their own self development to facilitate their own personal transformation first.

Due to lack of resources, OIL was not able to have their office base in the cluster community. This made it very difficult to provide ongoing regular support and counselling on a daily basis. For this reason, OIL arranged a follow up training day with each school's group of peer educators. This meant that several hours of quality time could be spent with the peer educators at one time and gaps could be filled in. However, it also meant that certain peer educators began to fall through the cracks due to a lack of weekly supervision. OIL also realized that unless active work was done to advocate for change within the community's resources, peer educators would not feel comfortable to refer their friends for help and treatment. This led to the launch of an active community advocacy and upliftment channel to assist peer educators in their role of advocating for change and uplifting their communities.

OIL hosted a summer conference at the end of 2001 where peer educators from all the schools attended together. This provided a context for sharing across cultures, ages and communities. Scope was set for the following year and new foundations were laid based on changes in the programme's structure and design.

### **3.2.5 Peer Education Services by Peer Educators**

Because OIL had not known how long the peer educators would remain in the programme when they were recruited, there were a lack of standards around attendance, peer educator roles and conduct. This made it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the training during the year and the impact. However, peer educators remained enthusiastic and many were involved in ongoing passing on of information to their peers and listening to their concerns, referring friends for help to community resources, presenting an assembly in their schools and role-modelling changes in their own lives. OIL hosted an advocacy youth forum called the Lube Lounge every six to eight weeks. This forum provided a context where positive role models and celebrities were interviewed and challenged on their life styles. Peer educators could invite their friends and peer education in action was facilitated.

### **3.3. Delivery of the Pilot Programme- Years 2 and 3, 2003-2004**

2002 was a year in which the core of the OIL peer education model was pioneered. 2003 and 2004 were years in which learnings from 2002 could be applied. This resulted in a more structured and long-term life cycle of the programme being put in place, programme standards, and clear manageable tasks and outputs for peer educators being set. These changes were then implemented for the first time in the pilot and a clear direction of how a future programme should be implemented began to take shape.

#### **3.3.1 Changes in Planning the Year Calendar**

In 2003 and 2004, the schools were well aware of OIL and their functions were included within the school calendar. Programme activities that were being



scheduled included assemblies, staff meetings, principal meetings and teacher meetings with each of the schools along with OIL facilitated weekly skills training and support sessions with the peer educators, camps, follow up days and training days.

The OIL year calendar was now seen as an important item to be planned in consultation with each school principal or the relevant school teacher in charge. This planning took place while schools were planning their activities and timetable for the following year and were therefore within the school calendar framework. Extra mural and academic activities happening within the school community impacted the programme in terms of attendance and attrition rate of peer educators and therefore OIL sought to be as informed as possible as to how to fit in best with the school calendar from the beginning of each year.

### **3.3.2 Changes in Meeting with School Stakeholders**

OIL continued to meet quarterly with school principals as well as provide regular written feedback and submit evaluation forms for principals to fill in. Annual assemblies in each school were standardised as were staff meetings once a year in each school.

OIL learned that when implementing peer education within a community development framework, the school should never be seen in isolation from the greater community. Without the active participation and ownership of the programme by all community groups and stakeholders, the impact of peer education will not be able to happen. These role players included:

- **Parents and Guardians:** Parents and guardians were kept informed as to the training their adolescents were receiving and the positive impact this was having. They were encouraged to acknowledge and support their children in their peer education role. OIL hosted parents meetings with each school on an annual basis.

- Clinics: Clinics were informed as to the programme aims. Their respect, support and partnership were identified as crucial. OIL realised it was useless to encourage adolescents to go for volunteer counselling and testing (VCT) or contraceptive advice if an uninformed, hence unfriendly, clinic sister then meets them. OIL had several meetings with the clinic staff, did training for clinic staff around values clarification and OIL also offered it's own counsellors to volunteer to counsel on the clinic premises on selected days. Peer educators were tasked with a clinic visit survey to ensure that they were informed on the what service the clinic offered and how to go about advocating for improvement and adolescent accessibility.
- Faith based organisations (FBO's): The OIL cluster is served by many churches and denominations. OIL realised that it was important that FBO's were informed and felt included in the programme and meetings took place with key church leaders to build relationship.
- Police: OIL saw the need for the the local police to be informed regarding their programme. As substance abuse and crime are issues dealt with within the peer education programme, the peer educators were encouraged to feel that the police were allies and not enemies and vice versa. OIL invited representatives from the community police station to come and interact with the peer educators. This not only created a space for advocacy to take place but also for peer educators to put a face to a resource that they would be able to refer their friends to.
- Counselling centres: OIL saw the need to build relationships with counselling centres that existed within the community. This ensured that scope for partnership with these centres was established and prevented OIL from duplicating services that were already available such as drug counselling and HIV support groups.
- Recreational facilities: OIL established links with people responsible for the town hall and library to increase the likelihood of their support and used these facilities for training events.

- Local businesses: OIL built relationship with local businesses by attending the local business breakfast function. They believe that business needs to be informed about peer educators in the light of developing future leaders, future customers and future workforce. They should be aware of the potential threat that HIV and Aids poses to future business but optimistic that the work that OIL were doing will stem this tide.
- Government: Partnership with local government was sought and links with Education Department and Health Department in the area were made. In 2003 OIL became an active member of the relevant community MSATT (multi-sectoral action task team).
- Community Media: A strong relationship with community media was sought in this time period and OIL was given exposure in local newspapers and radio on numerous occasions.
- Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs): OIL did an audit of most NGOs in the surrounding area and met with them to inform them regarding the programme. They were a rich source of information concerning the community. As one of the peer education roles is referral, OIL saw it as important to have a clear understanding of NGOs to which peer educators can refer their peers. Local NGOs could also be supported when peer educators undertake their advocacy and community upliftment role.

### **3.3.3 The Establishment of a Referral Base**

OIL realised that core to the peer education programme is the concept of a referral base or “catchment area”. This structure was established to ensure that the community network of resources for adolescent referrals was aware of OIL, and ready to offer their services in support of the adolescent peer education programme. It is there to ensure that adolescent counselling and assistance is in place within the cluster communities. OIL learned that although many resources existed within the community such as clinics, many adolescents were not comfortable to use these services. As a result, OIL strengthened its counselling

service offering HIV testing and general support for young people who were wishing to talk about their problems. This was done through offering OIL counsellors through existing clinic structures.

All OIL facilitators were trained to perform a minimum standard of basic counselling on all key adolescent issues and be able to facilitate referral for specialised help. Facilitators were trained to perform a bridge-building function by using the relationship base created through peer education as a means to channel adolescents into their community resources effectively.

#### **3.3.4 Changes in the Selection Process of Peer Educators**

Learnings from 2002 and 2003's recruitment process led to the addition of and omission of certain selection criteria. Omission of the word "positive role model" took place. OIL felt that it was important that "negative opinion" leaders be given every chance to be voted by their peers and perhaps being labelled "positive role model" from the outset would cause only "good leaders" to be selected and as a result hinder the impact of true peer education in the long run. A longer orientation process was recognised as important for allowing the personal transformation of the selected peer educators to take place first. Peer pressure, good or bad, works. OIL sought to work with the catalysts for fueling peer pressure amongst their peers in a way that peer pressure could be channelled positively for change.

Additions were added in to the selection criteria that highlighted the specific requirements and standards required of a peer educator such as attending training sessions throughout the year and being part of a long term programme while at school. Additional criteria from those of 2001 included the following:

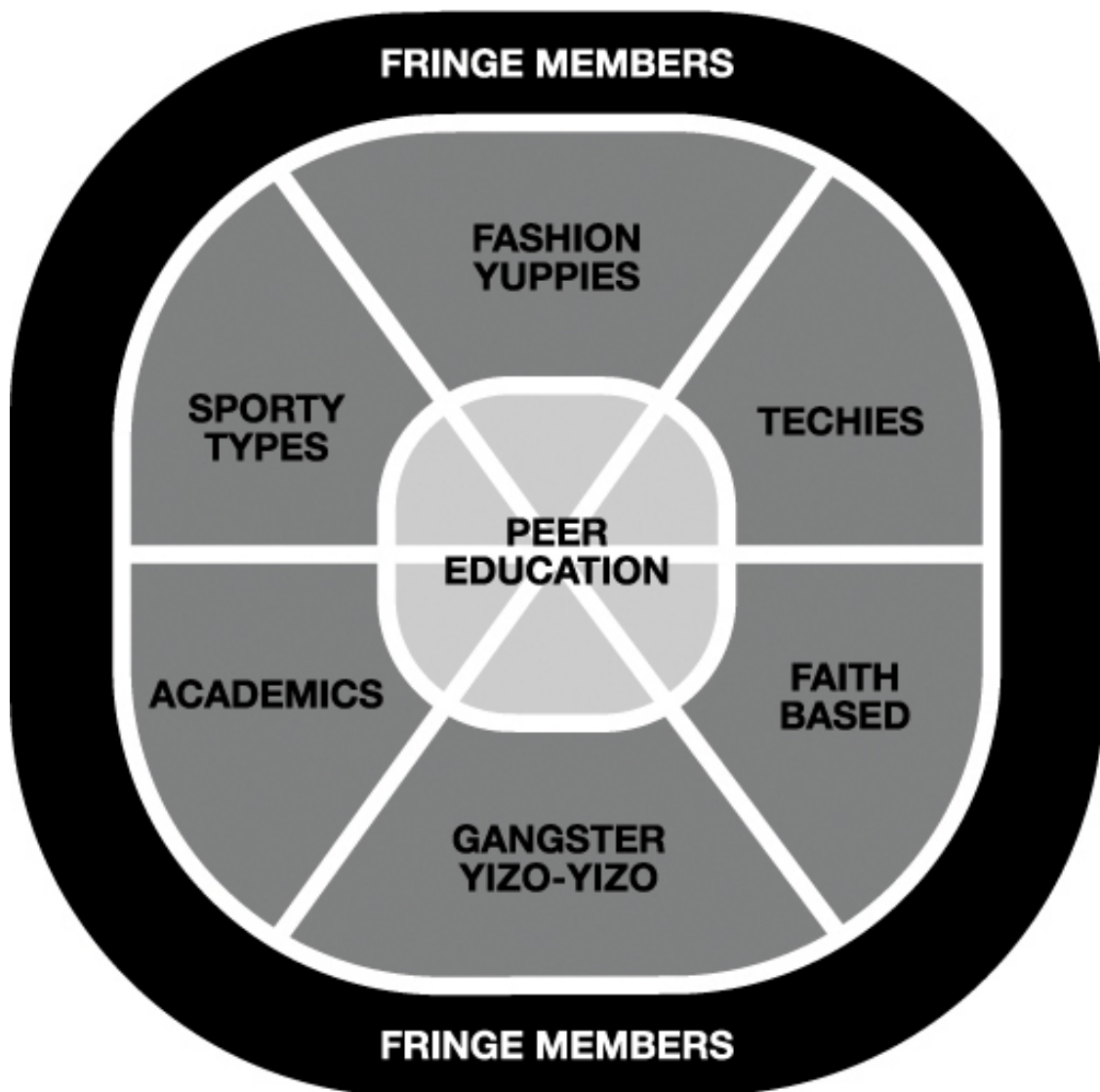
- Is someone who wants to help people.
- Has a passion to lead by example and be a nation builder.
- Has the strength of character to influence other peers easily.

- Is prepared to be trained in fulfilling the four roles of a peer educator.
- Will be committed to attending all the peer educator training sessions

All new peer educators were now selected from grade 10. This was due to the fact that time was needed for investing in the peer educators for them to be ready to perform effective peer education services and to continue the following year. Therefore grade 11 was too late for a new peer educator as grade 12 was a more academically pressured year requiring a less intense peer education role. Grade 9 was too young as the older learners did not look up to those in grade 9 and the maturity to handle the responsibility of a peer education role was lacking in the grade 9's from 2001's experience. 15% of a grade was still selected, however this caused a problem when a small grade ended up with a manageable small group dynamic of 15 peer educators and larger grades had more than 40 peer educators. Big groups were difficult to manage. Therefore 25 peer educators per grade became the understood standard to aim for in the future selection process into 2005.

The pre-selection presentation in 2004 included a clear understanding of the programme's life cycle and commitment was clearly communicated. This was to ensure that peer educators were prepared for what the programme would entail and not just agree to be part of it for "a free camp". Based on this information, the class then voted and elected 15% of their class to represent all the opinion leaders from all sub cultures within the grade.

*Figure 3- The diversity of the recruited group of leaders*



An interview process was now added to the recruitment process with the following objectives:

- To interview prospective peer educators to ensure that they had understood the peer educator selection criteria, the roles of a peer educator and the commitment required to participate in the programme.
- To establish rapport with the elected learners, and gain a sense of their characters.
- To get personal feedback as to the prospective peer educator's understanding of what it means to be a leader.
- To assess prospective peer educators for positive attitudes, prior experience, confidence and commitment.
- To get prospective peer educators to demonstrate appropriate helping characteristics and skills prior to selection.
- To give the prospective peer educator an opportunity to discontinue the process for whatever reason.
- To give facilitators an opportunity to sift out elected learners who were not elected according to the peer educator criteria.

In order to assess whether elected learners had the attributes required for a peer educator, elected peers were interviewed at a break time or after school before they were invited to attend the training sessions. Where possible, the interview was conducted in the prospective peer educator's first language by a facilitator. Interviews took about 15 minutes. Potential peer educators were given the interview sheets to fill out before the one-on-one interview took place. This ensured that they were well prepared and had time to think through the implications of the selection. They were then able to communicate their answers clearly to the facilitator conducting the interview.

The elected learner was asked to answer the following questions as honestly and as openly as possible. The questions included the following:

- Do you have any current leadership responsibilities either at school, within your community or at home that you could share your experiences about?
- Can you tell me about your strongest beliefs?
- What are some of your opinions of your community, its problems and possible solutions to these problems?
- What does it mean to be a role model, generally and personally?
- What do the words reliable and trustworthy mean to you? How do you think you show these qualities?
- How do you feel about working in a cross-cultural team?
- As part of the peer education programme there are weekly skills training sessions. How available do you think you will be to attend these sessions?
- How do you feel about being committed to fulfilling the four peer educator roles?
- What makes you believe that you will be an effective peer educator within your school and community?

### **3.3.5 Changes in the Training of the Peer Educators**

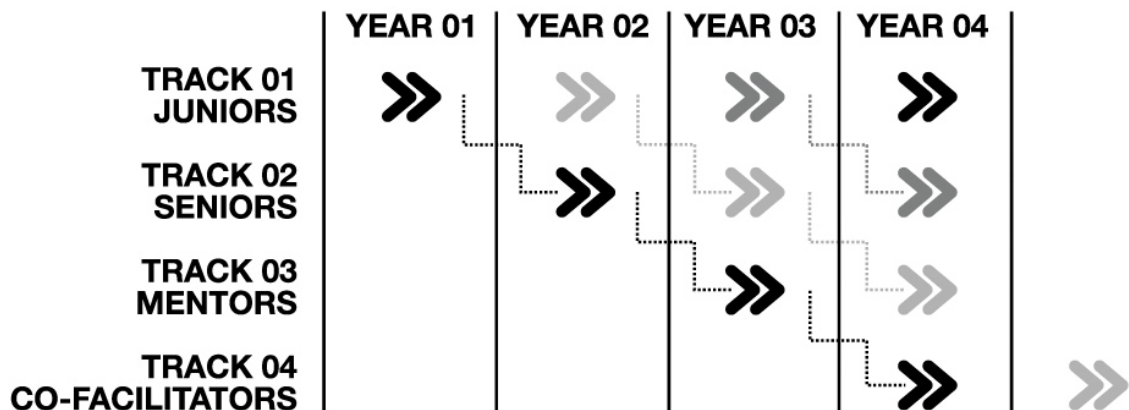
Work in 2003 and 2004 led to the implementation of a more structured training and support programme with the development of the “Track System”. The Track System was established to ensure that peer educators in their first year could enter their second year and receive training at a new level while new peer educators in grade 10 would commence at the level of year one. The track describes the level that a group of peer educators has received. The first year is Track 1, second year Track 2, third year Track 3, fourth year Track 4. Due to the nature of the selection process, Track 1's would generally be grade 10, Track 2's would be grade 11 and Track 3's grade 12. Track 4 would be past peer educators in their first year out of school who would join OIL and grow as co-facilitators within a peer education community development framework. In 2004 OIL had four past peer educators who joined OIL for the year to gain community



development skills. These past peer educators had joined the programme in grade 11 in 2002 and left school after grade 12. They spent 2004 shadowing in the role of the original facilitators. This ensured continuity and sustainability of peer education as they helped as co-facilitators. A less formal volunteer programme was also made available for another past peer educator that enabled her to remain involved within the peer education programme after school.

The Track System was designed to ensure that long term investment of time, one on one mentorship and programmatic depth could be in place in order to best facilitate a context for personal transformation of peer educators to lead to group transformation which would ultimately lead to community transformation. This was realised not to be a quick fix. Experience from 2002 and 2003 showed that when peer educators have had a long term investment for their own self development they are more likely to be able to influence their peers positively and will have developed the skills to demonstrate effective peer education amongst friends and younger learners. As a result, OIL felt that in developing a sustainable peer education model amidst the context of the massive impact HIV is having on community socialization in South Africa, its pilot model needed to embrace a long term strategy. This strategy would aim for depth and plant seeds that would bare the fruit of a “culture of peer education” in its target communities in the longer term. Eventually, when larger numbers of peer educators in all four Tracks are present, impact will increase and primary schools too can benefit from the facilitation of Track 4's.

Figure 4- A Four Year Peer Education Process



In 2003 OIL was adjusting to the Track System. This adjustment included a development process of a structured one year training and mentorship programme to equip junior peer educators in grade 10 to fulfill clearly defined Track 1 roles, performance standards and graduated responsibilities. The same process was put in place for senior peer educators in grade 11 and 12 to fulfill clearly defined Track 2 roles, performance standards and graduated responsibilities. OIL did not yet have formal Track 3's as this process would only come out of 2004 and be piloted in 2005.

OIL's office was now based in the community which enabled OIL to structure weekly and bi-weekly one hour skills training and support sessions with all Track 1's and all Track 2's throughout the school year. These took place either within school hours or after school and were held at a set time every week.

Sessions provided a space for support and included time for feedback and evaluation of the peer educator roles and services. Ongoing skills training was also included to ensure that peer educators continued to develop skills and attitudes in line with their responsibilities. These training and support sessions allowed the opportunity to focus on key issues facing that particular school team

and community. During these sessions peer educator services were planned and monitored. Participation in community projects was also planned during these sessions such as projects around poverty alleviation where peer educators were involved in building houses in their communities and youth friendly clinic project where they got involved in assisting the clinic to be accessible to young people.

Through a cross-cultural, value based life-skills training, counselling and mentoring programme, skilled and passionate OIL facilitators set out to empower adolescent leaders to positively impact their generation. OIL facilitators in teams of two to four would meet the individual school and Track groups at selected times. Track 1's received a four day camp at the beginning of the year and Track 2's received a two day training course to equip them for more advanced peer education in their second year. Over and above these sessions, the OIL Lube Lounge continued to grow and occurred every eight weeks. This brought the teenagers and their friends together from the whole cluster. OIL also facilitated channels for the peer educators to run community upliftment and advocacy projects as part of their peer educator roles. Two more annual summer conferences were held bringing all the peer educators together from the cluster to reflect, build relationships and set scope as a community voice for the year ahead.

The training sessions and content was reviewed and developed sequentially throughout the year in line with the following proposed topics:

#### **TRACK 1 Curriculum Outline**

##### ***Self Development***

*Aim: Demonstrate and apply an understanding of positive self-development*

<p><b>Self Development</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate and apply an understanding of positive self-development</i></p>
<p><b>Reproductive Health</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate and apply knowledge of adolescent reproductive health issues</i></p>
<p><b>Presentation and Facilitation</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate and apply an understanding of basic peer-to-peer presentation and facilitation skills</i></p>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate and apply an understanding of peer leadership</i></p>
<p><b>Community Development</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate an understanding of your community</i></p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate an understanding of effective peer-to-peer helping and referral</i></p>
<p><b>Media Literacy</b></p> <p><i>Aim: Demonstrate an understanding of and response to media and its impact on the adolescent generation</i></p>

## TRACK 2 Curriculum Outline

<p><b>Self Development</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate and apply a continued understanding of positive self-development</i></p>
<p><b>Presentation and Facilitation</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate and apply an understanding of advanced peer-to-peer presentation and facilitation skills</i></p>

<p><b>Self Development</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate and apply a continued understanding of positive self-development</i></p>
<p><b>Project Management</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate and apply an understanding of project management</i></p>
<p><b>Community Development</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate a developmental response to the needs of your community</i></p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate a deepened understanding of effective peer-to-peer helping and referral</i></p> <p><b>Media Literacy</b></p> <p><i>AIM- Demonstrate a deepened understanding of and response to media and its impact on the adolescent generation</i></p>

### 3.3.6 Changes to Peer Education Services by Peer Educators

2003 and 2004 resulted in more structured peer educator performance standards, and clear manageable tasks and outputs being piloted. Previously, although peer educators had been motivated to make a difference, lack of accountability, supervision and specific deliverables led to certain unfulfilled tasks and peer education goals. Peer educators were given four roles to help them effectively promote skills, create a cross-cultural and value based social norm and provide healthy lifestyle alternatives amongst their peers. These roles happened throughout the year and across different activities and outputs.

The four roles involve:

1- role-modelling - positive healthy role-modelling and informally influencing of peers.

2- educating - educating and providing information to peers and younger learners (within a structured context as well as within an informal context)

3- recognising needs and referring -recognising peers in need and referring peers for specialised help, resource access or counselling.

4- advocacy and community upliftment. - being activists, raising community awareness of important issues related to adolescents and acting on these issues to ensure change.

All four roles were designed to function together for the success of peer education. The OIL belief is that when these roles function together they result in personal transformation, which leads to group transformation which leads to community transformation. Different tasks were given for Track 1's as the focus for Track 2 is more outreach focused than in Track 1. Track 1 peer educators are still focusing mainly on their own identity and values as a leaders.

OIL developed and began to pilot the implementation of standards that included minimum attendance requirements, activity outputs (tasks) and responsibilities that were required of the senior peer educator. These performance standards are there to ensure that effective fulfilment of the 4 roles of a peer educator take place. Facilitators kept registers and assessment forms. A standard for behaviour was under development that included:

- A code of conduct for healthy behaviour (in line with peer educator mandate, curriculum outcomes and OIL vision).
- Agreed upon consequences for violating behaviour.
- A rehabilitation programme (a way to redeem themselves) in place for peer educators who fail repeatedly in achieving behavioural standards.

Specific outputs for the different Tracks includes the following:

Track 1 standards of attendance:

- Classroom selection process.
- Selection interview.
- 80% orientation sessions.
- 3 day camp.
- 80% skills training and support sessions.
- 2 cross cluster events per year eg advocacy forum/ night to remember/ summer conference per year.

Track 1 outputs (tasks/services):

- Completion of base line knowledge test and post test .
- 1 clinic visit survey.
- 1 assembly presentation/drama.
- 1 mini community audit.
- 5 recorded interviews with peers at junior level per 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> term.
- 1 prepared presentation demonstrating knowledge and facilitation skills to peers in groups of 2-4 per year.
- 1 junior portfolio per year.
- 1 mini community project per term (suggested integration with health calendar).

Track 2 standards of attendance:

- 2 day training course/camp.
- 80% of senior skills training and support sessions.
- 2 cross cluster events per year e.g. advocacy lube lounge forum/ summer conference per year.

Track 2 outputs (tasks/services):

- 1 mini community resource assessment survey per term

- 2hrs logged volunteering within a community organisation e.g. clinic or police station/church per term
- 50 recorded interviews with peers at senior level per year
- 4 structured lessons demonstrating knowledge and facilitation skills to peers in teams of 4 or 5
- 1 piece of written material for school or community in pamphlet/brochure on key adolescent issue.
- 1 senior portfolio per year.
- 1 mini community project per term (suggested integration with health calendar)

From the mouth of a peer educator: "One of my friends was so impressed with my change that he is prepared to change his behaviour."

#### **4. Lessons Learned**

Once the pilot was drawing to completion in 2004, the author of this paper as representative of OIL at the time, together with representatives of the seven other implementing organisations involved in the pilot, were brought together as PESC to compile their learnings through several workshops during 2004. This led to the development and documentation of a proposed common model under the brand called GOLD (Generation of Leaders Discovered), for implementation in 2005 and future roll out into other communities. OIL's peer education model was endorsed as the best practice pilot on the frontline of the peer education initiative. The OIL pilot model was used to largely inform PESC's proposed GOLD model and to serve as a reference site in the future for ongoing excellent and refined peer education practice for other communities implementing the GOLD model to learn from. OIL sees 2005 as critical to established a refined and excellent working model aiming towards full impact in the years ahead.



When the results of the Western Cape Education Department's pilot project are published through implementation guides and manuals, implementing organisations who wish to implement the GOLD model should have plenty of practical and well-tested guidelines, tools and support of master trainers to help them. In the interim, the key factors which appear to have contributed most to the success of the OIL's pilot programme are:

- **OIL's** uncompromising standards of peer education. (The OIL model demands a high quality of contact between facilitator and peer educator).
- Standing firm in the belief that sustained and positive behaviour change takes a significant investment of time and requires one-on-one mentorship, programmatic depth and resources. This is often seen as a second choice to funders wanting a quick set of results with high numbers. Often this approach compromises quality and long term sustainability.
- Persevering with a vision despite a lack of sustainable resources and despite many opposing view points that sought to cause OIL to have compromised their commitment to long term programmatic depth coupled with a values based person by person behaviour change approach through positive role modelling.
- Dealing with young people as partners and respecting their input, ownership and leadership as key to any relevant youth development initiative.
- Embracing and seeking community ownership and buy as a fundamental building block for implementing a sustainable programme within a community.

- Recognising that every community is different and has its own needs and issues. Programmes need to respect that there is no formula to transformation, it can only be given space to happen. This works best when facilitators and staff lead by example.
- Bringing different young people together from different cultures and socio economic backgrounds has proven critical to social restitution in the face of fighting HIV and AIDS.
- Recognising that effective peer education begins with the strength of character of the facilitators. In-depth, high quality training of facilitators in terms of skills as well as personal development as role models amongst young leaders must be prioritized. All OIL facilitators undergo personal supervision, mentorship and in service training on a regular basis to ensure a quality filter down into the equipping of peer educators.
- High levels of skills and commitment, careful selection and ongoing support of the facilitators, who serve on the front-line of the peer education programme.
- The high level of credibility and support enjoyed by OIL among the nursing staff at the clinics and school principals. This has been developed over three years of involvement and allows OIL to play a leadership role in the community amongst young people.
- OIL's ethos of servant leadership and leading by example. This approach is shared by everyone involved in the organisation, and is constantly nurtured by its leadership.
- Flexibility and adaptability.

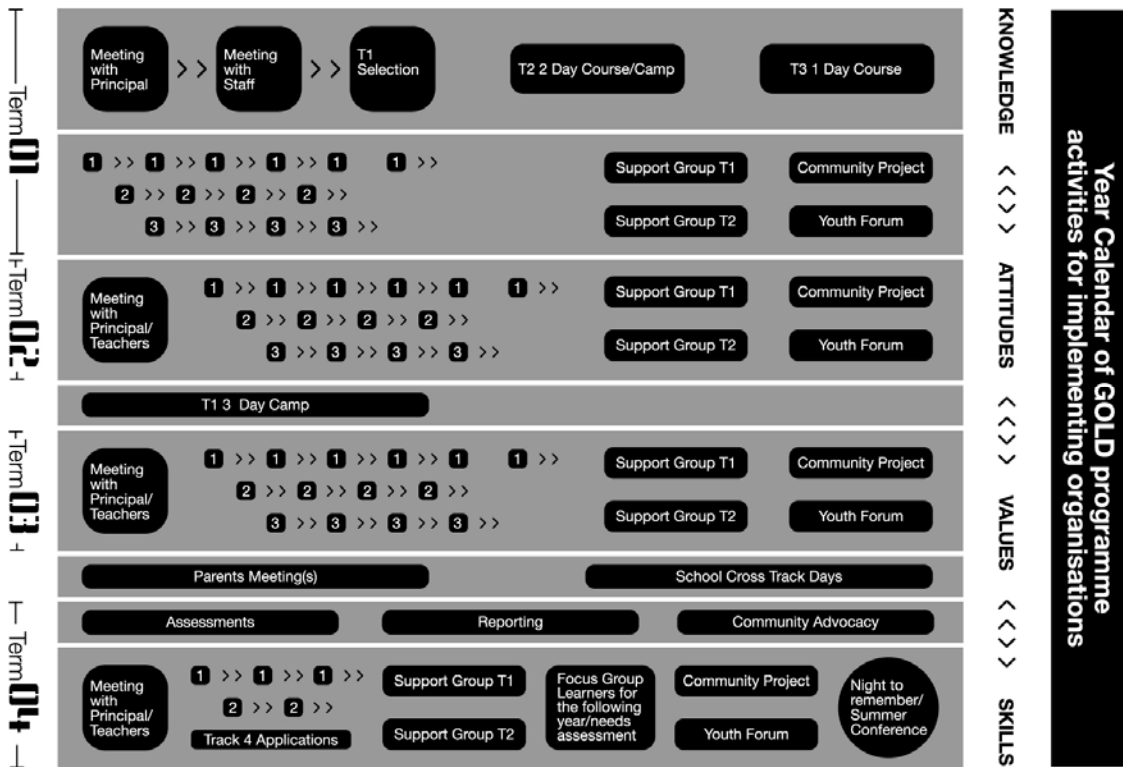
- Making a constant commitment to hold up the beliefs that : each adolescent has a purpose and when motivated and equipped, is able to reach his/her destiny; each adolescent has leadership potential that can be tapped and used to positively change the lives of his/her peers; every adolescent, regardless of background, is capable of responding to circumstance in a way that will lead to healthy relationships; the messenger is as important, if not more important, than the message; society needs to value the importance of family and community and South Africa's greatest resource is its young people and above all they need to be loved.
- The ability and willingness of OIL's partners – particularly the peer educators and Western Cape Education Department – to perform their respective roles. The programme would be unlikely to succeed without this support.

## **6. Key Components of the Proposed GOLD Model for Broader Implementation**

Although the pilot programme has come to an end, refinement and ongoing pioneering is still taking place amongst all implementing organisations aiming to implement the proposed GOLD model (informed by the OIL pilot programme together with input from other NGO's involved in the same pilot in their respective communities). Below is the summary of the proposed GOLD model that is in the process of being documented and developed by the GOLD Peer Education Development Agency. The GOLD Peer Education Agency was formed as a result of PESC's role coming to an end and the need for an organisation that would facilitate the equipping of other organisations to implement the GOLD model and thus implement sustainable school based peer education across the SADEC region in the years to come.

- The model is implemented within a developmental framework by an implementing organisation working within the school community setting.
- The model is founded on Ratanang Standards Towards Excellent Peer Education Programmes.
- The model is a long-term peer education programme of three years (optional fourth year) in which peer educators fulfil 4 specific roles at varying levels of responsibility and deliver specific peer education services.
- The model is implemented within a cluster of 4-5 schools within one geographical area.
- The model has an effective “catchment area” in place, where young people can be referred for help. This includes a support group where peer educators can invite their friends (supervised by a facilitator with counselling skills) and a community referral base.
- The model enhances and strengthens the life-orientation curriculum within the classroom (it is not a replacement).
- The model is cross-cultural and values based.
- The model embraces a role modelling and a futures-oriented education approach to sustained behaviour change.
- The model is implemented by skilled peer education facilitators, who equip adolescent leaders to influence their peers.
- The model establishes relationships with all community stakeholders as a priority. This includes linkages with schools, clinics, churches, community-based organisations and forums, police, etc.

Figure 5- Example of the Year Calendar of a Working GOLD Model in its Fourth Year



## 6. Challenges

### 6.1 Finance

In common with most organisations, OIL could not have launched a pilot programme like this without external funding. As already mentioned, this help came in the form of support from the WCED and other corporate and private donors. However, this funding has been drastically cut, due to the limited funds available now that the pilot has been completed. Funding has been allocated from Global fund for roll out but does not support the human resource capacity needed to implement as was done in the pilot programme. More cost effective once off and mass media initiatives are still being seen as more favourable to

funders despite the lack of long term behaviour change rendered from these activities. Other organisations wishing to implement peer education may need to implement a compromised programme due to a lack of resources and needing to perform for funders within the first year with qualitative outputs.

Uncertainties as to the financial sustainability of the programme has led to the resignation or proposed resignation of several key staff for more secure jobs, which in turn means recruiting and training new facilitators – a lengthy and expensive process. With peer education being based on relationship, this may pose a high risk for the long-term growth of the programme and peer educator morale.

## **6.2 The Support of the Community**

The programme depends on an implied contract between the community resources to enable young people to achieve their full potential and access help. Not all communities within which peer education is implemented will have existing and well functioning resources. Although one of the objectives of the programme is to advocate for change in this area, a low resourced community increases the burden on the implementing organization to provide these services. If peer educators are well equipped to refer their friends for help but the help is not in place, more damage may be done than good.

## **6.3 Denial and Stigma around HIV Status**

One of the main challenges facing the peer education programme is that HIV and AIDS is still perceived by adolescents as a disease that affects adults more than young people. Peer education programmes need to reach both HIV negative teenagers and enable them to remain HIV negative as well as reach HIV positive teenagers and enable them to live longer healthier lives. The disease is still heavily stigmatised, and revealing their status can lead to the family and the

community rejecting the young person. Breaking through to peer educators to internalise this issue and take it up on behalf of their generation is not easy.

#### **6.4 School and Academic Intervention**

Reversing the effects of youth risk behaviour and enabling young people to reach their full potential is not feasible for implementing organisations, without ensuring that partnerships are created with those that can provide channels for young people to study and be mentored in the work place later on from the programme. Corporate South Africa needs to support the peer education programme and create opportunities for young leaders to continue to grow as leaders in society and role models within their own communities.

#### **6.5 Poverty alleviation**

Majority of young people are victims of poverty. Unemployment amongst parents is high and many peer educators attend skills training session hungry. For effective peer education programmes into the future, job creation strategies for young people and poverty alleviation projects need to go hand in hand with the sustainability of the programme.

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